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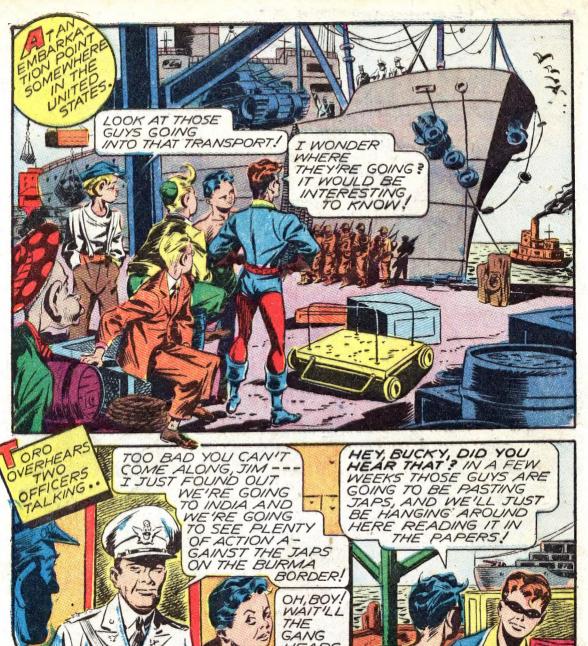
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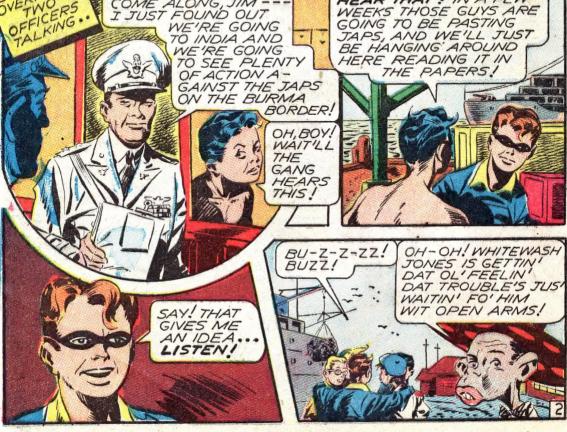
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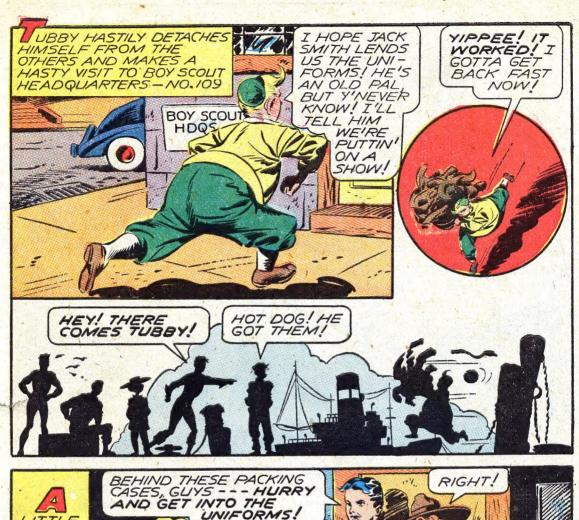
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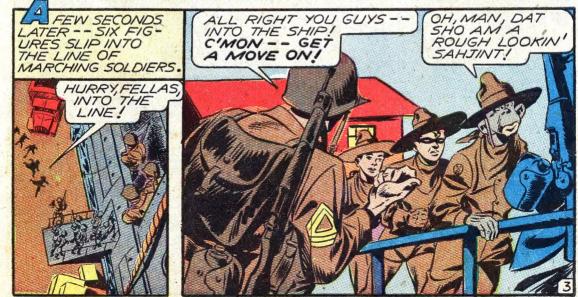




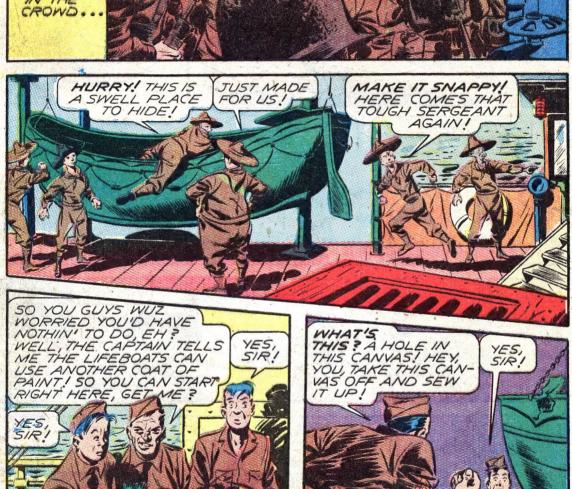


























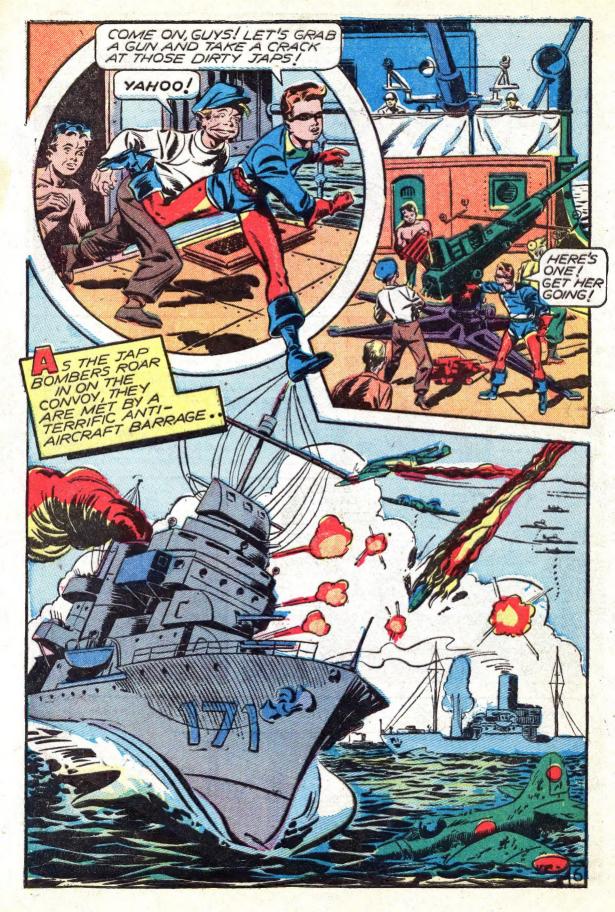


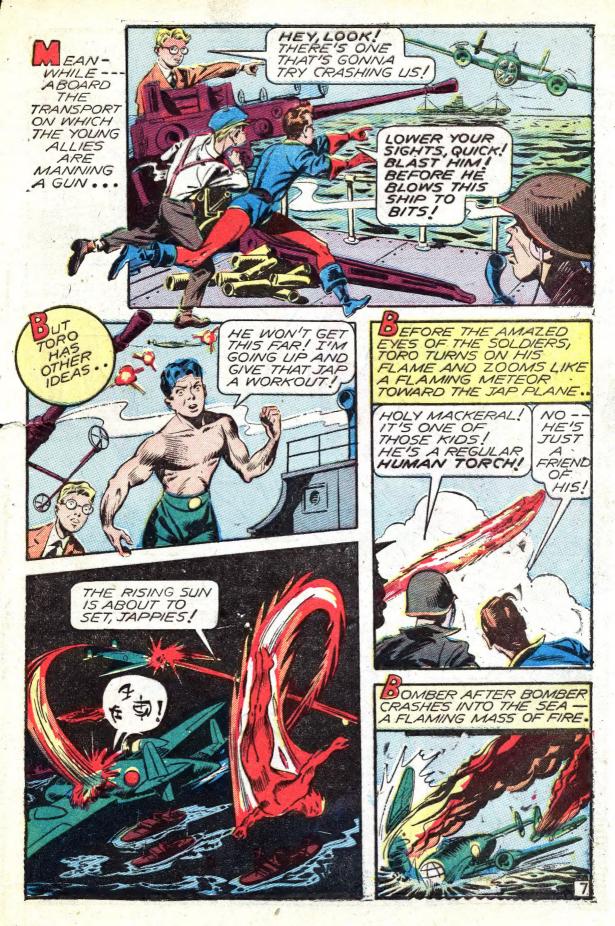
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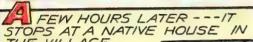














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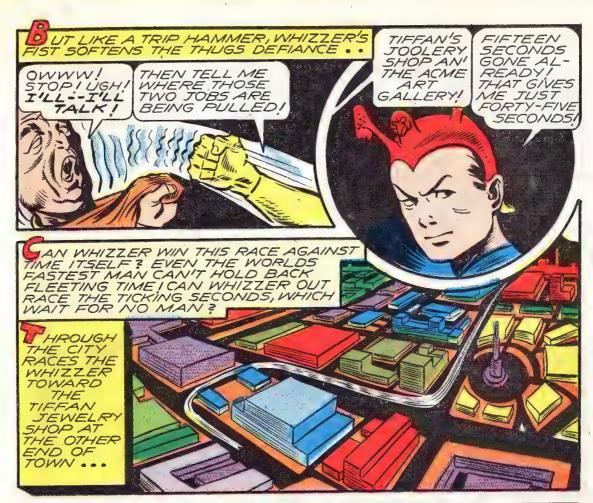










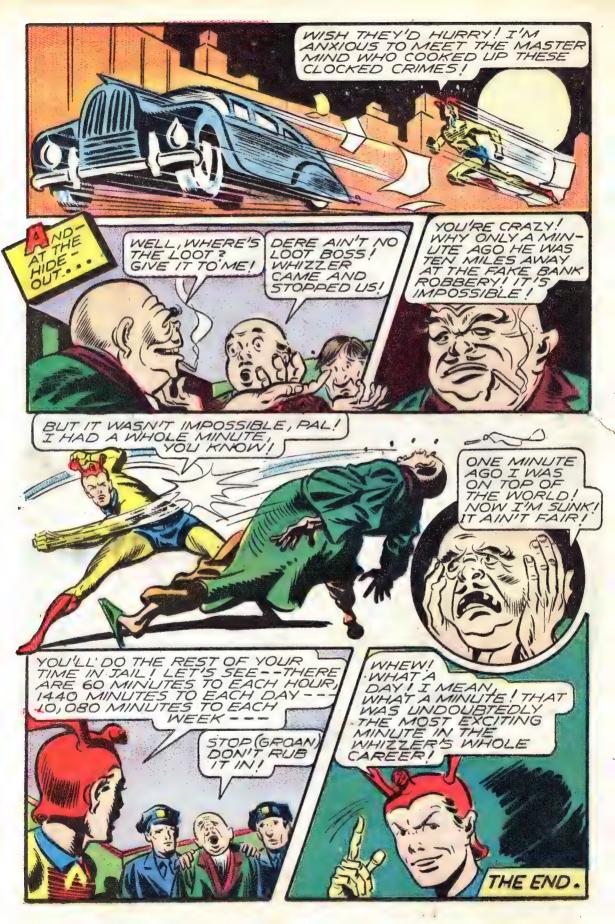




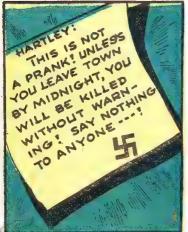














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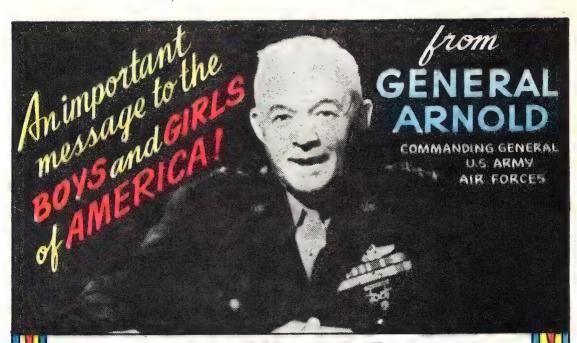












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THERE had always been suspicion in the back of Martin's thoughts. He couldn't remember when it first entered his mind that Otto was anything but another member of the crew aboard the freighter. And now it didn't matter. Nothing mattered, not even the endless heaving ocean surrounding the life raft, the white hot sky pinning them down, swinging mercilessly above them like a sword.

"Five days and five nights," Martin croaked, forcing the words past swollen lips. "How much longer?"

Big Randall stirred sluggishly, turning a bearded face toward his companion. "What's the difference? He'd see to it it didn't make any no matter what."

Martin glared toward the front of the raft where Otto squatted, his powerful body hunched, his rounded, hard face turned to survey the water stretching away upon all sides.

"I been thinking the same thing." Martin averted his eyes as the dutchman's round face swung upon them. "No sub would have spotted us if it hadn't been tipped off. That—that—!"

"You talk too much," Otto grumbled from his end. "Talk less. Save your breath. You don't say anything truthful most of the time."

Martin snarled. "If I was half your size, just half—"

Otto made a gesture with his big hand and Martin slumped back, his thinning body trembling with the anger racing through him. What was the difference? Just as Randall suggested, even if they were seen by aircraft, or a patrol boat, before they could be picked up Otto would dish them out to the sharks. And there were plenty of them. Martin turned slowly to stare out over the undulating water. He'd seen their fins before, once a white belly as one rolled over and slid into the depthless green.

Otto said, "Come get your rations." He added, threateningly, "One at a time."

ARTIN crawled fearfully forward to take the biscuits Otto offered. "You're starving us, that's what. If I were half a man—"

"Shut up. Get back. Randall . . . you come next."

Martin began greedily to grind the biscuit between his teeth→

He cried out harshly as the raft lurched dangerously. Otto and Randall were locked in each others arms, were swaying back and forth, feet spread wide apart, looking almost like two dirty chimps. Martin forgot his food as his eyes watched the struggling men, hope welling up suddenly within him.

"Kill him!" Martin shrieked with frenzy.
"Kill him, Randall! Throw him overboard . . . throw him over—"

In spite of his strength, Randall gave ground. Otto sent a sledge-hammer fist driving forward and Randall reeled drunkenly, collapsed at Martin's feet, a huge, twisted mass, his yellowish face turned toward the flaming sky.

"You've killed him!" Martin chattered, fear racing through his trembling body. "You've killed him. You're a murderer, but you think you'll get away with it. You won't. God will judge you—"

"Quiet." Otto stood with feet braced wide.
"You talk too much."

ATER, Martin knew Randall wasn't dead after all. Otto gave him a slender drink from one of the canteens he was hoarding up front.

"Wonder, you don't throw him overboard," Martin cried. "Why don't you? You're starving us to death. Think of the grub you'd save with him out of the way. And me, too—"

Otto shook his head, went back to his end of the raft. The sun wheeled down through the sky and the wind came up a little. To the west clouds billowed into the sky like huge white castles built upon the snowy slopes of mighty mountains. The wind quickened.

Randall dragged himself to a sitting position, sat with his head between his hands. Later he croaked, "Water . . . water . . ."

Otto gave him another small drink, ripped the canteen out of Randall's clutching hands to offer it briefly to Martin.

"Not much," Otto warned. "There is little

Martin snarled. "I'd spit it in your face if we were within sight of land—"

"Drink," Otto commanded harshly. "Then be quiet."

It rained that night and the waves rose and washed down upon them, and Martin lay against the edge of the raft and shivered. Randall lay beside him, motionless, inert. Illuminated by a tongue of lightning Martin saw Otto bailing water, and realized that if the storm became worse the boat would be smashed and they'd all drown. Martin began to wish it would happen. At least Otto would get his then, too, with the rest of them. As it was, he was slowly starving them to death. Probably didn't have nerve enough to kill them outright.

The sun was up again, the clouds gone, the wind. It grew hotter and later Martin had to plead for a drink. His thirst was more than he could stand. Otto gave it grudgingly, striking Martin's hands down when he reached for the canteen.

He gave Randall a drink, then backed up to his end of the raft and sat down. Martin noted that Otto didn't drink from the canteen and for a while Martin waited, pretending he was asleep, but watching through the crack of his swollen lids. He recalled hazily that he hadn't seen the big dutchman take food or water for days . . . probably was sneaking his share and then some, when it was night.

E didn't take anything now. The blazing rays of the sun beat down upon them and later Martin started, listening. A sound had come to him. Laboriously he raised himself upon his elbows.

The sound of waves had come distinctly to his ears. They must be close to land, an island. But it would be land...

"Listen." Martin hissed. "You — you hear hear that? There...! An island. See it? There, over there!" He tried to point but his hand kept drifting down. "I see it!" He almost screamed. "Randall—"

"You just talk. You see things. You are out of your head. There is no island. Nothing!"

Resignedly Martin sank back. Otto brought the canteen, tipping it up very high now to give him a swig. And Randall, who looked dead and probably was—it seemed a waste of precious water forcing the stuff between his cracked lips.

Later Otto growled, "Ah. There is land. Over

The words came to Martin through a haze, and he attempted to raise himself and could not. Well, it didn't matter. He was done for.

"We will be carried past!" Otto exclaimed softly.

And Martin laughed, a ragged, rusty sound that hurt his chest and mouth. "You'll diewith us. You—you—"

It was growing dark and suddenly there were voices and Martin felt himself being lifted. Probably imagination though. Besides it didn't matter. He felt different, felt suddenly rested, as if this were actually death and he was glad of it.

ARTIN opened his eyes. He knew right away he wasn't dead. The man in the navak uniform was too real.

"You're doing fine," the man said, "So is Randall. We know about you, how your freighter was torpedoed. Most of the crew was saved."

For a moment Martin rested. At last, as if prompted by a force outside himself he asked, "What—what about—Otto? He was with us—"

"He'll be all right, too. Although he was in a much worse condition. Evidently he had had no food or water for days. No rest. When we picked you up after he had towed the raft to the island, he was almost exhausted. He has a wonderful body."

The voice drifted away but the thought remained inside Martin's head. Otto had nothing to eat, or drink: He towed the raft to safety, when they had been drifting past land and out to sea. Otto had a wonderful body . . .

Martin smiled faintly. Otto was a wonderful guy. He must live so he could apologize . . .



















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